

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 1643

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: XO, XC, XE, XF, XW, XI, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS: KUNAYEV VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 16529, (B) SEOUL 727

SUMMARY: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL DESCRIBES KUNAYEV'S VISIT TO NORTH
KOREA AS ILLUSTRATING "POSITIVE" IMPROVEMENT IN SOVIET-DPRK
RELATIONS. OFFICIAL STATED KUNAYEV "COMPLETELY" SUPPORTED
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PYONGYANG ON REUNIFICATION ISSUE AND LAID WREATH AT MEMORIAL TO
CHINESE SOLDIERS KILLED IN KOREAN WAR. NORTH KOREANS CRITICIZED
PRESIDENT CARTER, REITERATED NEUTRALITY IN SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE
AND ADOPTED DIFFERENT POSITION THAN SOVIETS ON MIDDLE EAST AND
HORN. WE BELIEVE KUNAYEV VISIT INDICATES A BOTTOMING-OUT AND
COULD PRESAGE SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN DPRK-SOVIET RELATIONS.
END SUMMARY.

1. AS MENTIONED REF B, BOTH THE NORTH KOREAN AND THE SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF THE KUNAYEV DELEGATION'S VISIT TO NORTH KOREA PORTRAY A CONTINUING COOLNESS IN DPRK-SOVIET RELATIONS. SOVIET PRESS COVERAGE HAS BEEN MOSTLY LIMITED TO TASS ITEMS DATELINED PYONGYANG REPORTING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DELEGATION DURING THE VISIT AND SELECTED PUBLIC REMARKS MADE BY KUNAYEV AND DPRK LEADERS. WE HAVE SEEN NO COVERAGE OF VISIT IN THE SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS SINCE THE KUNAYEV DELEGATION DEPARTED PYONGYANG. THIS COVERAGE OF COURSE CONTRASTS WITH USUAL SOVIET PRESS REPORTING OF VISITS BY POLITBURO LEVEL DELEGATIONS TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

2. IN JAN. 26 COMMENTS ON KUNAYEV VISIT, SOVIET MFA KOREAN DESK OFFICER Y.D. FADEYEV, AS IN PREVIOUS CONVERATIONS (REF A), PUT BEST POSSIBLE FACE ON CURRENT STATE OF DPRK-SOVIET RELATIONS. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE TIMING OF PRESENTATION OF SOVIET AWARD TO KIM IL-SONG, HE RESPONDED THAT THE SOVIETS DESIRED TO COMPLETE THE PRESENTATION BEFORE KIM'S TRIP TO MOSCOW (WHICH HE SAID COULD OCCUR THIS YEAR) WHEN THE NORTH KOREAN LEADER WILL PRESENT THE DPRK'S HIGHEST AWARD TO BREZHNEV. FADEYEV DOWNPLAYED THE LACK OF A JOINT COMMUNIQUE BY STATING THAT A JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT IS STANDARD FARE FOR A POLITICALLY "MIDDLE LEVEL" (SIC) SOVIET DELEGATION.

3. FADEYEV, WHO WAS ON THE KUNAYEV DELEGATION, SAID THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LAST RANKING SOVIET PARTY DELEGATION TO NORTH KOREA OCCURRED IN 1972 WHEN THE CPSU CC SECRETARY (NOW DEP. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS) KATUSHEV VISITED PYONGYANG. FADEYEV CLAIMED THE KUNAYEV VISIT ILLUSTRATED THE "POSITIVE" IMPROVEMENT IN DPRK-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE VISIT'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO STRENGTHEN INTER-PARTY AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND NOT TO SETTLE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. THE TALKS WITH NORTH KOREAN LEADERS COVERED BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. KUNAYEV ASSURED HIS HOSTS THAT THE SOVIET UNION "COMPLETELY" SUPPORTS PYONGYANG'S POSITION ON REUNIFICATION. (NOTE: IN THIS CONNECTION WE NOTE THAT KUNAYEV DID GO BEYOND HIS REUNIFICATION STATEMENT REPORTED REF B, PARA 2. JAN. 21 TASS STORY DATELINED PYONGYANG QUOTES HIM AS STATING THAT "THE SOVIET UNION ACTIVELY SUPPORTS THE DPRK STRUGGLE FOR THE UNIFICATION OF KOREA THROUGH PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC MEANS WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE AND ON THE BASIS OF THE KOREAN PEOPLES' FREE EXPRESSION OF WILL." END NOTE.) ACCORDING TO FADEYEV, THE NORTH KOREANS REPEATED THEIR POSITION ON REUNIFICATION DURING THE TALKS AND STRONGLY CRITICIZED PRESIDENT CARTER FOR NOT FULFILLING PLEDGES MADE DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TO WITHDRAW U.S. TROOPS FROM KOREA. FADEYEV CLAIMED BOTH SIDES RECONFIRMED THEIR AGREEMENT FOR A KIM IL-SONG VISIT TO MOSCOW.

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4. SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS: FADEYEV DESCRIBED AND DISMISSED
JAPANESE PRESS REPORTS THAT KUNAYEV SECRETLY MET WITH THE PRC
AMBASSADOR IN PYONGYANG. HE SAID THAT PRC AMBASSADOR WAS PRESENT
WHEN KUNAYEV PLACED A WREATH ON MONUMENT TO CHINESE SOLDIERS
KILLED DURING THE KOREAN WAR. DURING THE TALKS, THE SOVIETS
EXPLAINED MOSCOW'S POSITION ON THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE. THE
NORTH KOREANS RESPONDED THAT BOTH THE USSR AND THE PRC ARE
DPRK "ALLIES" AND THAT PYONGYANG DESIRES TO KEEP GOOD RELATIONS
WITH BOTH.
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5. VN-KAMPUCHEAN CONFLICT, MIDDLE EAST, HORN: FADEYEV SAID THAT THE SOVIETS EXPLAINED THEIR POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR THE VIETNAMESE IN THEIR CONFLICT WITH KAMPUCHEA. HE CLAIMED THAT THE NORTH KOREANS DID NOT CHOOSE SIDES OR COMMENT ON THE CHINESE VIEW OF THE CONFLICT BUT CALLED FOR A CESSATION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN FAVOR OF A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION THAT WOULD BENEFIT SOCIALISM IN BOTH COUNTRIES. (NOTE: WE ARE CHARY OF ACCEPTING FADEYEV'S DESCRIPTION OF THIS PURPORTED STATEMENT BY THE NORTH KOREANS SINCE IT IS IDENTICAL TO THAT OF THE USSR AND THE VIETNAMESE AND CONFLICTS WITH PYONGYAN'S TILT TOWARD KAMPUCHEA. END NOTE.) FADEYEV SAID THE NORTH KOREANS SHOWED A "CAUTIOUS ATTITUDE" ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND DID NOT CRITICIZE SADAT. THE NORTH KOREANS ALSO REFUSED TO TAKE SIDES ON THE HORN CONFLICT, STATING THAT THE PDRK DESIRES GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA.

6. COMMENT: FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO CHARACTERIZE KUNAYEV'S VISIT AS OCCURRING IN CONTEXT OF "THE COOLING TREND" IN SOVIET-DPRK RELATIONS MENTIONED REF B. THE VISIT, COMING AFTER A SIX-YEAR INTERVAL IN POLITBURO-LEVEL SOVIET VISITS TO NORTH KOREA, ILLUSTRATES AT THE LEAST A LEVELING OFF IN THE RELATIONSHIP. OTHER FACTORS, INCLUDING THE SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO SEND THE DELEGATION, THE NORTH KOREAN WILLINGNESS TO SEND THE DELEGATION, THE NORTH KOREAN WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE IT, THE PRESENTATION OF THE ORDER OF LENIN TO KIM, RENEWED EXPRESSIONS OF SOVIET PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR UNIFICATION (REPEATED MOST RECENTLY IN PRIVATE BY GROMYKO DURING SONODA TALKS), AND POSSIBLY INCREASED DPRK ECONOMIC NEEDS IN WAKE OF NEW SEVEN YEAR PLAN, ALL SUPPORT FADEYEV'S CONTENTION THAT SOVIET-DPRK RELATIONS ARE MOVING IN "POSITIVE" DIRECTION. WE WOULD HASTEN TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT THE STRONG BRAKES ON A MARKED IMPROVEMENT REMAIN, AS SEEN BY THE SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF

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THE KUNAYEV VISIT. THESE WOULD INCLUDE MOSCOW'S OBVIOUS RESTRAINT IN MORE FORCEFULLY SUPPORTING THE DPRK CAUSE, WARM DPRK-PRC RELATIONS AND CONTINUING FOREIGN POLICY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PYONGYANG. IN SUM, UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WOULD JUDGE THAT THERE IS SOME - BUT NOT MUCH - ROOM FOR A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF TIES BETWEEN THE TWO. A KIM IL-SONG TRIP TO MOSCOW WOULD BE A BETTER INDICATION THAT THIS IMPROVEMENT IS ACTUALLY TAKING PLACE.

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